

Marketing management reflecting a holistic approach : Marketing management as an interactional proliferative process that accommodates unintended consequences

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Abstract: Today, the relationship between companies and consumers is undergoing a major transformation because the information environment is evolving. In response to this changing situation, a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of marketing management and the interaction perspective described in marketing management studies, which is epitomised by the holistic approach and has recently begun attracting increased attention, is presented. It is believed that the goal of contemporary marketing management revolves around managing the dynamic process of holistic marketing as smoothly as possible based on the premise that marketing management is an interactional proliferative process that can accommodate unintended consequences. Therefore, it is important to examine the theoretical discussion linked to the dynamic process of holistic marketing, which is becoming the dominant perspective of today's marketing management strategies.

Keywords: Holistic approach, Unintended consequences, Interactional proliferative process

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I—Introduction

When considering the development of a theory of marketing management, Takashima (2008) stated that it can be divided into two perspectives: analysis-planning and interaction.

The analysis-planning perspective involves a series of irreversible processes in which market and

internal resources are analysed in advance, a marketing plan is selected based on the analysis, and the execution of the plan is managed. This perspective mainly assumes that marketing efforts are being directed at an unspecified number of consumers, and limited consumer demand information must be taken from ad hoc market research and post-sales data; thus, demand forecasting and market analysis are important issues in this type of planning.¹ In addition, studies on consumer behaviour are important for such analyses.² Then, in the sequential steps of analysing the market, formulating the marketing plan, and managing the execution of the plan while focusing on producing a description and analysis of the behaviour, a practical guide to determining the method of analysis, planning, and management is presented. In other words, by omitting some information about the complicated processes of interactions, it is possible to engage in simple speculative conjecture of a limited problem, resulting in the development of effective marketing methods. This perspective is also based on the premise that corporate executives and marketing departments make intensive decisions and make and manage plans.³

On the other hand, the interaction-based perspective is a theory that assumes that decision-making regarding marketing activities is realised through interactions with customers and interactions between the departments within a company.⁴ Regarding interactions with customers, it is assumed that companies can obtain demand-related information directly when they are identified and knowledge of past trading experiences can be utilised.⁵

This perspective does not envision the steps in the marketing plan as irreversible; rather, the process

involves sequentially modifying the elements of the plan through dialogue with customers and discussions between departments, highlighting the fact that sales departments and others that are in contact with customers are involved in the decision-making process guiding the marketing strategy. In other words, it is understood that the decision-making process guiding the marketing strategy involves interactions between departments and persons in charge.⁶

II——A dual perspective on marketing management

During the analysis phase, the analysis-planning perspective revolves around conducting a cumulative study to analyse the behaviour of an unspecified number of consumers, and promoting understanding of the method based on this perspective to marketing has become a central focus of education.⁷ However, in the sense that this perspective can be used to identify effective techniques for analysis, planning, and management while retaining awareness of the practical aspects of companies' decision-making processes, the degree to which such studies' results contribute to actual practice is not necessarily high. One of the reasons for this situation is that the studies based on the analysis-planning perspective tend to be divided into those that are focused on the detailed problem areas in each phase of analysis, planning, and management, making it difficult to discuss marketing behaviours as a whole and limiting the practical applications of the theoretical outcomes of studies.⁸

Another reason for this situation is that it is difficult to anticipate corporate innovation during the analysis phase. An elaborate model of consumer

behaviour is proposed and validated, but its practical implications are limited to explaining the current situation and do not cover unanticipated factors or lead to more attractive policies because only choices from among the known alternatives can be derived from the analysis; thus, it would be difficult to formulate suggestions related to innovations that could be of great interest in practice.⁹

Although the interactive perspective has not been the subject of as many studies as the analysis-planning perspective, in recent years, there has been an increasing amount of attention paid to the relationship between marketing and resources and capability-based perspectives.¹⁰ In this perspective, the focus of study is describing the interactions between companies and within organisations in terms of marketing behaviours, making this perspective highly compatible with discussions of a company's competitive advantages and attempts at innovation.¹¹ On the other hand, regarding the practical implications of this perspective, rather than guiding concrete plans, we aim to establish the conditions that foster relationships and encourage organisations to form competitive advantages and innovate.¹² In addition, it is also effective to consider why situations that are not ideal arise. It is believed that this perspective has a lot of room for theoretical development. Not only interactions with a specific customer as represented by relationship marketing can be addressed; the many unidentified consumers who are left out of the analysis-planning perspective are also the main targets. The application of this perspective to targeted marketing behaviours is expected to occur in the future.¹³ In other words, by identifying the phase in which the marketing strategy to be used is determined through an examination of the interaction between those within

a company and various other actors, such as consumers, we can grasp which problems are transformed by the perspectives mentioned above and which cannot be resolved as well as the circumstances under which a competitive advantage is formed by overcoming them.

Next, we will focus on network analysis, which is the study of relationships and connections between agents that are strongly related, in terms of how to unite their perspectives, as this is an interactive perspective to marketing management related to the central issues in this study. Beginning with a review of previous studies on marketing management using this perspective, contemporary marketing and the results of the interactions between the stakeholders in marketing management, which is one of the central issues of this study, will be connected to the construction of a theoretical framework for management.

III—Two approaches to marketing management in an interactional perspective

This section reflects an interactional perspective, which is the study of relationships and connections between agents and is extremely relevant to uniting the viewpoints of those involved in interactive marketing management, which is the central issue in this study.

One of the most important paradigms in theoretical marketing studies in recent years has been the network approach.¹⁴ The network approach is a system of techniques and theories mainly drawing on social network analysis in various fields of social science, such as sociology, politics, social psychology, anthropology, business administration, and communication theory, and it has received much attention and yielded many important results.¹⁵

However, it must be noted that the study of marketing management using the network approach, which is the study of relationships and connections between agents, is still in its infancy, and the uniqueness of marketing studies using the network approach has been established.^{16,17}

However, the approach used in the management of marketing activities undertaken in response to the drastic changes in the various socio-economic environments surrounding marketing and the consequences of the multi-layered interactions of such changes is based on previous theories and methods. This approach is not adequate, and, in marketing management studies, many areas have remained underrepresented, including solutions to phenomena, conceptualisations including interactivity, theory construction, and method establishment. Kanemitsu (2003) stated that the reason that the introduction of social network analysis into marketing studies was delayed was that 'the method of analysis in this field was based on a behavioural statistical model, which is the opposite of social network analysis.'¹⁸

There are several reasons that the network approach is needed in the field of marketing studies, but they can be broadly divided into the following three categories.¹⁹ The first is concern with relationship management as a source of competitive advantage. Marketing management studies have focused on and conceptualised specific dyads and companies have generally been regarded as the sum of the specific dyads that exist within them. We consider dyads only a part of the whole and presuppose an understanding of holistic relationships and how the structure of holistic relationships affects a specific subject or dyad, but little research has been done on how they affect

people.

However, marketing activities are not carried out in the context of cookie-cutter dyads; rather, they are focused on the relationships between various actors, as seen, for example, in the influence of reference groups on consumer behaviour and the consideration of competing factors in competitive strategy studies. What is being done in this field is not adequate, given that marketing management studies tend to target only specific clipped dyads. In other words, it is necessary to analyse and study the relationship structure and mutual relations and effects of interactions between actors.

The second is due to innovations in CRM. The innovation of information and communication technology (ICT) and the accompanying innovation, popularisation, and establishment of CRM methods have led to a dramatic reduction in customer management costs. As a result, marketing activities that deal with consumers as segments have shifted their focus to recognising and understanding consumers as individuals.²⁰ Against this background, interest in various relationship management strategies for individual consumers has emerged. In this context, the need for a network approach to marketing management studies is advocated.

The final is the presence of the consumer as a transmitter. The proliferation of, and increase in, social networking sites (hereafter referred to as 'SNSs') highlights the role of consumers as transmitters of information. The emergence of consumers as information transmitters and of word-of-mouth as a medium for sharing information has expanded the previously limited links between consumers quantitatively and spatially, and companies can no longer ignore their influence/effectiveness in marketing management. In this

context, the motivation to understand and analyse this phenomenon is the reason to demonstrate the effectiveness of the network approach in marketing management studies.

It can be said that the network approach described in marketing management studies is still in its infancy. In this context, Kubota and Haga (2008) developed a network approach to marketing management in which three approaches to analysing relationships in marketing are identified based on interaction, structure, and similarity.

The interaction-focused perspective revolves around the interactions between events, assumes that coupling occurs between the objects of analysis, and is concerned with the various attributes of the objects of analysis.²¹ The structure-focused approach, on the other hand, revolves around the structure of the interaction field and there is less concern for the attributes of individual analysts.²² Finally, the similarity-focused approach revolves around the similarities between events, emphasising the similarities between objects without necessarily focusing on the connections between them.²³

Kubota and Haga (2008) stated that, in these three approaches, when the research object is viewed as a network, the structural approach corresponds to the network approach in marketing management studies.

The characteristics of the network approach in marketing management studies can be broadly divided into the following three categories:²⁴ One of the characteristics of the network approach in marketing management studies is that it reflects a temporal perspective. This is the point at which the type of interaction between actors, especially in transactional relationships, is classified as temporary, short-term, long-term, or continuous.

The second characteristic of marketing management studies based on the network approach is the expansion of the object of analysis. Marketing management studies using the network approach consider triadic relationships as the object of analysis, this allows for a more dynamic analysis than viewing such relationships as an extension of dyadic interactions. This constitutes the theoretical background of the argument for the validity of conducting marketing management studies from a holistic perspective.

The third characteristic of the network approach to marketing management studies is its emphasis on the relationship between the situation and context. This tendency is related to the network approach's holistic view of relationships, in which the various circumstances, within which transactional and exchange-based relationships are established, as well as the view of individual relationships as dependent on the context of the whole relationship, are considered.

This approach is useful because not only economic, but also social and cultural factors, influence transactions and exchanges in marketing contexts; therefore, relationships should not be considered isolated but should be understood within the context of the whole network, including the backgrounds of such relationships and the influence of the relationships on others.

Another important paradigm in theoretical marketing studies in recent years has been the holistic approach, which is encompassed by the interactional perspective, the central issue in this study. The holistic approach to marketing management studies is based on the idea that it is impossible to understand the whole context at any point in time.

The definition of the holistic approach is still limited and varies between researchers. There are many concepts like holistic marketing, such as the total systems and ecological systems approaches. The most significant difference between the holistic approach and these is that the former aims to promote value co-creation in a comprehensive and dynamic process that incorporates the customer into the marketing process, as opposed to the previous approaches, which are aimed at achieving optimisation and efficiency through strategic integration on the corporate side.

Kolter and Keller (2011) defined holistic marketing as a marketing approach that encompasses four components: relationship marketing, integrated marketing, internal marketing, and performance marketing.²⁵ Regarding the perception of marketing communication management studies based on this holistic approach, Kobayashi (2010) argued that the approach consists of a list of mechanistic marketing terms, and, although it is called 'holistic', there is no explanation of the interconnected nature of the elements. Kobayashi (2010) has also criticised the current situation in the US, where both academia and the marketing industry consider the term 'holistic approach' a so-called cross-media term without understanding its roots and create new words, one after another, without examining their meanings. It can be said that the marketing discourse in Japanese academia has also been influenced by the Kotlerian paradigm and the US academic context in its perception of the holistic approach.

In a recent development in the holistic approach to studies of marketing management, Philip Kotler, Hermawan Kartajaya, and Iwan Setiawan (2010) proposed 'Marketing 3.0', in which the objectives of

marketing have changed in the following ways: Marketing 1.0 is 'how to sell', Marketing 2.0 is 'how to get customers to continue to buy', and Marketing 3.0 is 'how to get consumers to cooperate (in product development, sales, etc.)'. In this context, marketing 3.0 is not about 'product development' or 'differentiation', which are the main weapons of traditional marketing, but about the social value of products and services, the idea of presenting a corporate vision, and the need for collaborative marketing based on dialogue and cooperation through the Internet and social networks.²⁶

In response to this transformation in marketing, represented by the advocacy of Marketing 3.0, a corresponding transformation in marketing communication design is also required. Onzo et al. (2011) advocated the necessity of 'integrated marketing communication' (hereafter referred to as 'IMC') 3.0 as a communication design in which consumers are considered equals and companies and consumers work together to enhance and mature brand value.

IMC 3.0, which corresponds to Marketing 3.0, is presented as a recent development in relation to the holistic approach to studies of marketing management and is, in other words, an addition to the management of IMC, which is the theory and practice of the activities that have been established in the past to make management control possible. We believe that this conceptualisation employs a strategic structure based on an indirect approach with the addition of a management concept in the sense that unintended consequences are not predicted or managed/controlled, as symbolised by the self-perpetuation of communication; rather, unintended consequences are envisioned as an afterthought.

Thus, the relationship between the company and the consumer is situated within an unmanageable sphere and requires the implementation of marketing management strategies because, in the relationship with consumers, who are the equals of the company, the reactions of consumers to the marketing activities developed by the company and the results of their participation in these activities are likely to be unmanageable and uncontrollable, regardless of the company's intentions. The goal is to incorporate these unintended consequences into the management objectives.

To address this issue, in the next chapter, we will attempt to discuss the idea of 'unintended consequences' in indirect management theoretically. Indirect management strategies envision unintended consequences as a source of indirectness and are oriented toward strategies that deliberately incorporate them into the overall strategy.

IV—Theoretical discussion: holistic approach and unintended consequences

The issue is whether these indirect management strategies can be established as strategies to deliberately accommodate unintended consequences.²⁸

According to Ishii (2003), the superiority of indirect management strategies resulted from their anticipation of the environment which they were likely to create and the incorporation of this fact into companies' strategies. In other words, this approach is superior because the unintended consequences produced by the strategy have already been incorporated into it in advance and are considered an important factor in decision making. Ishii went on to point out the endless cycle that indirect management strategies create, which is focused on the endless possibility of producing unintended

consequences by incorporating unintended consequences into a strategy. Since unintended consequences are, in principle, external to the consequences of intended actions, no matter how thoroughly unintended consequences are anticipated and incorporated into a company's strategy, a new unintended consequence will arise in each instance. Therefore, the indirect management strategy of successfully incorporating unintended consequences into strategies is not viable if they cannot be anticipated in advance.

Numagami (2000) attempted to put the issue to rest by introducing the concept of 'reflective practitioners'. The reflective practitioner is envisaged as an entity that can limit the infinite character of unintended consequences. Specifically, it is one that continues to recover from all unintended consequences in time, each time, within the boundaries of its strategy. Ishii pointed out that the reflective practitioner is only a 'magic word', and the realisation of the concept will be a challenge for the future.

In response to these points, Mizukoshi (2006) attempted to move away from the concept of marketing to customers. The customer is decidedly distinct from, and external to, the corporate organisation. Therefore, he argued that the unintended consequences of corporate activity must be reconsidered as an external issue which is separate from the original intentions of the company. This situation shows that there is a disconnection, or, in the extreme, a case of irrelevance, between the original intentions of the company (or even its subsequent actions) and the unintended consequences of its activities. Nevertheless, unintended consequences are generally considered when carrying out corporate

activities. Mizukoshi examined the open contingency structure in the work of Kuriki (2003), pointing out that the determination of intentions and unintended consequences depends on subsequent developments.

Based on Mizukoshi's (2006) argument, it can be argued that the indirect management strategy is more effective, not as a strategy of anticipating unintended consequences in advance, but rather of taking advantage of the occurrence of unintended consequences. In fact, this perception appears to be asserted in several places in Numagami's work. For example, Numagami argued that indirect management strategies were more likely to be implemented because they exploited unintended consequences, no longer reflecting the logic that unintended consequences needed to be considered in advance but rather that which dictated that unintended consequences could be used to a company's advantage. Thus, there is no need for a reflective practitioner that must continually anticipate unintended consequences. Numagami himself later assumed that true strategic management was characterised by deep thinking and effortless execution and seems to have relaxed the image of the practitioner who must keep taking endless steps, as was originally envisaged. The question here, then, is why two approaches to the treatment of unintended consequences have emerged in what Numagami calls the 'indirect management strategy'.

On the one hand, it is a strategy for anticipating unintended consequences in advance; on the other, it is designed to exploit unintended consequences. The two approaches seem to be similar, but they have different backgrounds. In the former, unintended consequences can ultimately be

recovered from within the boundaries of the intended strategy. In the latter, however, unintended consequences are viewed as occurring outside the strategy in principle.

In examining the reasons for this division, Kuriki's argument is still the key. The reason is that there is another decision maker for the company, the consumer, who can cause unintended consequences. Conversely, in Numagami's view, unintended consequences were assumed to arise, not only from the consumer, but also from within the corporate organisation. While this perception, on the one hand, facilitated the categorisation of unintended consequences and was useful in considering the nature of the strategy for addressing each, it may have masked the existence of various types of unintended consequences.

When the unintended consequences outside the organisation are brought down to the same level as those occurring within it, this difficulties with using an indirect management strategy to capture unintended consequences are especially likely to arise. Conversely, if we focus on the unintended consequences outside the organisation thoroughly, and, in that sense, on unintended consequences in general, then it is no longer possible to capture them; hence, we find an indirect management strategy of exploiting them rather than the other way round. For this recognition to become self-evident, it is important to note that the consumer can be assumed to be a 'decisive other' to the organisation. This is a fundamental assumption in marketing theory. In this sense, indirect management strategies that make use of unintended consequences can be called 'marketing-oriented' indirect management strategies. To sum up the discussion so far, indirect management strategies in marketing are based on

the existence of reflective flows, which can be more effective than indirect management strategies that attempt to capture unintended consequences.

Ishii et al. (2002, 2006) and Ikeo (2003) argued that the Internet and the space it has created have transformed marketing and consumer behaviour and discussed the prospects for marketing and marketing communication management studies in the future. It is precisely within the 'other possible, not inevitable, not impossible world'²⁹, symbolised by the interactions or exchanges between actors within the Internet space, the world of their eventuality,³⁰ and the world of 'unintended consequences' described by Numagami (2000) that we believe that new meanings and market creation possibilities can be mediated by marketing management.

Numagami (2000), in his description of 'A world that could be otherwise, not inevitable, but not impossible',³¹ presupposed a theoretical consideration of meaningful management: 'The spill-over effects and by-products of human actions that are intentionally rational are a result of the extent to which individuals have learned and developed practical awareness.'³² Ishii (2002) argued that 'the reality that marketing management study should excel at is the reality that cannot be reduced to the intentions of the subject. As a result, the main theme of marketing management lies in the unintended consequences of subjects, which cannot be reduced to their intentions, and in the phase of encountering others that they cannot manipulate, and others whose existence could not even be assumed.'³³

In the field in which marketing management is concerned, there are two unintended consequences that are attracting a growing amount of attention in recent years. The first is 'co-creation', and the second is the proliferation of communication between

actors resulting from marketing activities.

Kotler et al. (2010) identified co-creation as a concept to be addressed in the future in marketing studies, especially in relation to product management.³⁴ Co-creation is defined as 'the co-creation of value by a company and its customers'.³⁵ Value can be a service (Bendapudi and Leone 2003), a product (Sawhney Verona & Prandelli 2005), or information or content (von Hippel 2005, Grewal Lilien & Mallapragada 2006), which involves co-creation in a diverse range of subject areas.

Hoyer et al. (2010) argued that co-creation with consumers, which is incorporated into the co-creation phase up to the point of market introduction, can be expected to speed up the spread of products through the highly effective medium of word-of-mouth, reducing promotion costs. However, there is little discussion on how to manage co-creation through marketing communications between companies and consumers³⁶ in these studies on co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, Bendapudi and Leone 2003, Sawhney Verona & Prandelli 2005, von Hippel 2005, Grewal Lilien & Mallapragada 2006), and we believe this is because the discussion is centred on the extent to which companies can lead, manage, and control outcomes.

On the other hand, the communication process, which has been assumed to occur in marketing management, has shifted from one-way communication to a two-way approach and has become an integral part of the Internet space due to the evolution and development of ICT. Communication, which should be premised on the extension and penetration of the 'communication process', should evolve into a form in which the interaction between the two parties, both those transmitting and receiving information, is not one

that is closed but rather one in which information repeatedly multiplies in a chain reaction. The aforementioned process is referred to as the self-proliferation process of communication by Kumakura (2008). Furthermore this paper emphasizes the context of a holistic approach to marketing management as a whole in interactional perspective and refers to it as the interactional proliferation process. In this process, companies, which are the main actors in marketing management, must abandon the illusion of a management view of manipulation and even control of consumers from outside.

Within this interactional proliferative framework, corporation-generated marketing activities are only part of the process. Against this backdrop, it is no longer possible to predict, analyse, or plan the flows/processes of interaction between the actors or the results they produce. We believe that the marketing management perspective must be conceptualised as one accepting the eventuality of unintended consequences. Furthermore, in the interactional proliferative process, a marketing management model that ‘incorporates’ not only interaction into a flow between actors, but also into communication and interaction, is needed as a platform for its activities.

V—In lieu of a conclusion

In support of a holistic approach to marketing management, in this study, we focused on rethinking

marketing management studies from a theoretical perspective. Because the conventional view of marketing management based on an analytical and planning-based perspective fails to capture the reality of the situation and the fact that its practice and introduction constitute a transitory phenomenon that is difficult to grasp.

In this paper, modern marketing management is discussed from an interactional perspective theoretically. In the context of the aforementioned theoretical discussion, we conclude that the today’s marketing management model, based on a holistic approach, involves ‘soft management’ and is based on the premise that the factors underlying the process are intricately intertwined. Moreover, reactions to the complex interplay of these factors can confound companies’ original intentions. Therefore, it is difficult to manage the process using an analysis-planning management strategy in which the subject is anticipated and manipulated in advance. It is extremely difficult to control a complex world composed of an infinite number of intertwined factors.

Modern marketing management requires a process of reassessing the changing market situation and making each subsequent move carefully depending on the previous one. This management process may appear to be composed of haphazard, uncontrolled activities, but it is not. As the basis of marketing management theory, such actions are not spur-of-the-moment activities; rather, they are integrated and purposeful.

Notes

- 1 Takashima (2008) p. 258
- 2 Takashima (2008) p. 258
- 3 Takashima (2008) p. 258

- 4 Takashima (2008) p. 265
- 5 Takashima (2008) p. 265
- 6 Takashima (2008) p. 268

- 7 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 8 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 9 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 10 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 11 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 12 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 13 cf. Takashima (2010) pp. 9-11
- 14 Fujioka (2002) p. 34
- 15 Kanemitsu (2003) p. ii
- 16 cf. Fujioka (2002) pp. 35-36
- 17 cf. Wuyts et al. (2004) p. 279
- 18 Kanemitsu (2003) p. 284
- 19 Kubo (2008) p. 33
- 20 Kubo (2008) p. 33
- 21 Kubota & Haga (2008) p. 5
- 22 Kubota & Haga (2008) p. 5
- 23 Kubota & Haga (2008) p. 5
- 24 cf. Kubo (2008) p. 34
- 25 Kolter & Keller (2011) p. 20
- 26 Philip Kotler, Hermawan Kartajaya, & Iwan Setiawan (2010) p. 34
- 27 cf. Numagami (2000) pp. 187-216
- 28 The theoretical discussion in this chapter has relied to a significant extent on the arguments in Saito (2009, 2013).
- 29 Ishii (2002) p.37
- 30 Ishii (2002) p.30
- 31 Ishii (2002) p.37
- 32 Numagami (2002) p. 197
- 33 Ishii (2012) pp. 28-29
- 34 Kotler et al. (2010) p. 34
- 35 Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) p. 8
- 36 Hoyer et al. (2010) p. 284

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